

Town of Lincoln

Budget Board Meeting

March 6, 2014

Present:

**​Carl Brunetti​​Mike Babbitt​​Bob
Turner​​Rhonda Lacombe
​Bill
Deutsch​​Maria
DiDomenico​​
​Hagop
DiBiasio​​Richard Foster**

**McManus​​Paul
Marcello​​Paul

Jawharjian​Bill**

There were no members absent.

Call to Order

The meeting began at 7:31 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

There were no public comments or questions at the time.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of March 5th were distributed for review.

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Bob Turner, to accept the minutes.

The minutes were approved by a vote of 9-0 with Bill McManus and

Rhonda Lacombe abstaining because they were not present on March 5th.

Correspondence

There was no new correspondence at the time.

Business

FY15 Municipal Budget

FY15 Education Budget

Matthew Nicholson, a Consultant working with the Town Planner and Police Department on the new addition, was present to discuss the reduction in scope of work on the project.

It will include landscaping, rear access for emergency vehicles, increased parking to meet the allowance, a garage to store reclaimed items, etc. and an elevator will be required in order to be ADA compliant.

The lower level detention area will still exist and renovations to that area will be an add-alternate option to the base bid. This would include increased male and female locker room space, a break room, some offices, and the Detective area.

Additionally the current electrical system is maxed out at 95% capacity, so a new service housed in a new mechanical room will be needed to service the new level of need, as well as a new water line to accommodate new restroom fixtures.

The Upper Level addition will all be included in the base bid including offices for the Chief and other Administration, a large conference room for training, and an office for the Finance Department.

Existing renovations for the upper level will include offices for the Captain, archive storage, an interview room, updated restrooms to ADA compliance, and an increased records area in the lobby.

Communications/Dispatch is not moving from its current location but new lighting, a ceiling, paint, and carpeting will be done.

The adjusted plan for the new addition is decreased to 4,300 square feet which was a result of rearranging space to be more efficient but not because anything was taken out of the plan.

The exterior stairs in the rear of the addition will not be for public entrance, but do cover the building as a means of egress.

The project will be bid out in April, and after a few weeks of time for the Contractors to submit, the goal is to break ground in May and be done in about 12 months in May of 2015.

The cost is \$400 per square foot for only the addition portion as well as renovations to the existing upper level of the project.

Renovations to the bottom level of the existing building are not included as they are an add-alternate to the bid, but the hope is that the bids will come in lower than the original estimates so that there will be funding to accommodate that portion of the project.

The estimated cost of the entire project is \$3.2 million.

The cost for Phase I of the addition works out to be \$435 a square foot, and the cost of Phase II of the addition, including renovations to the existing building, works out to be \$185 a square foot.

Both of those estimates include a 10% contingency as well as a 2% bidding cost for phasing, but does not include general conditions, bond insurance, permitting and fees, or electrical upgrades.

Also included are a 5% cost for Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment, as well as landscaping and Architect and Engineering Fees.

The project will provide a fire barrier between the existing building and addition, but no sprinkler system is required by code.

The Police Department will continue to operate out of the building while it is being worked on, and the addition will be fully operational upon completion.

The Town Administrator will get a complete cost analysis of the project from the Architect and provide it to the Budget Board.

The \$125,000 in operating capital that is designated for Furnishings would be for the existing space and is only not included in the resolution for the addition project because there were not sufficient funds available in Fund 50.

The air conditioning and heating will be a new separate unit which will not accommodate the Town Hall portion of the existing building, but the new electrical service will be able to accommodate the needs

of the entire building.

The addition is not going to be the same height as the existing building because there was extra space needed, particularly for the HVAC unit.

The Budget Board requested a projection of the cost of having a pitched roof instead of a flat roof for the new addition.

In response to the Budget Board discussion of whether a new freestanding structure would be better than an addition to the Police Station, the Town Administrator noted that a study was done and a new building would require at least 14,000 square feet and it would cause the Town to abandon approximately 8,000 of space currently used in the existing building.

Smaller stations than 14,000 square feet have been bid at approximately \$7 million.

Also, the General Assembly may be looking at a statewide consolidation of Police Stations which is something to consider even though nothing has been done with that yet.

The plan for the addition was reduced in square footage because upon evaluation, it was noted that the Town would be leaving space in the existing building unused when it just needs some renovations. The Town Administrator believes the new plan will provide adequate room for everything that the Police Department aims to do.

The Budget Board requested a copy of the Design and Development documents of the project.

The Town Administrator answered questions that had been forwarded to him by the Budget Board.

His education budget recommendations included a \$500,000 increase in the local share/maintenance of effort and \$1.5 million in capital improvement projects.

The Schools' audited surplus as of 6/30 was \$2.3 million.

When taking into account \$616,000 spent on the Northern Roof, \$440,463 on Security Upgrades that exceeded the resolution allocated amounts, \$220,000 for the Lonsdale Roof, \$40,000 for High School Repairs, and \$200,000 earmarked for the beginning stages of the renovation of the football field in the event it is approved there would be a School Surplus balance of approximately \$529,000, which is approximately 1% of the budget which should be left for possible emergency projects.

There is an anticipated \$108,500 to be received in Reimbursed Aid for Housing, but it is not certain whether that will be received in the current year or in the beginning of next year.

The Town Administrator's education budget recommendation is a 2.78% increase which he feels is adequate.

He noted that he believes the schools will need to reexamine their fixed costs and work on putting more maintenance projects in the operating budget as there may not be surpluses going forward.

With a phaseout of gaming revenues coming, the Town can anticipate that their capital reserve funds will be decreased.

He has decreased the recommended Municipal Allocation by \$200,000 because nearby Plainville, MA was granted a license for a casino which may decrease gaming revenues.

It's possible that legislation that will give the Town 1% of gaming revenues if there are decreases may not be enacted until Massachusetts casinos are open for at least a year.

Currently, the revenues are down \$50,000.

The Town Administrator will provide the Budget Board with a copy of the study of the impact of the future of gaming revenues on the Town. It does not seem that Meal Tax Revenues would be similarly affected.

Housing Aid Reimbursement for proven eligible projects is 40%.

In 2016, due to the bonding amortization schedule, the Town expects to be able to bond significantly again without increasing taxes.

Small changes (for example, \$1 or \$2) seen in the recommended budget are due to a formula used and the Finance Director could correct that.

A Municipal Employee Roster is being prepared and will be provided to the Budget Board.

The Town Council is looking for a Generic Study of the Fire Departments, which will study a specific list of things, and the Town Administrator believes \$25,000 is sufficient.

Grant Matching is for when the Town receives grants that are contingent upon the Town spending money.

There is automatically \$10,000 put in each department because sometimes it is not clear when those grants will become available.

Since the Finance Department does not anticipate receiving any of those grants, the Finance Director has allocated their grant allotment to Substance Abuse, as they are now not completely funded by the State.

There will be \$10,000 allocated to the Police Department because they consistently learn about grants that are unanticipated.

The Information Technologies Director has submitted a detailed analysis of maintenance expenses.

The increase was because the line was often adjusted and had to be reallocated from other areas.

It was noted that based on the choice to fill a position or not, retirements have a different effect on the budget if they happen after the budget is approved.

The overage of Pensions is because the numbers are estimated during the budget process and the real numbers are not received until the budget is already approved.

Last year the state mandated the Town to look back at the account and make sure it was correct.

It is also affected by return on investments, and while 2013 seems to have been a good year, if the returns go down the Town's payment could go back up again.

The Town Administrator does believe the funding recommended for Utilities will be sufficient.

In response to the Budget Board's question about a plan for Tree Planting the Town Administrator noted that whenever the Town does projects such as roadwork they do look at planting but they do not have a separate plan for replacing trees.

Also any trees in sidewalk areas that are taken out do not get replaced because of root problems that cause dangerous conditions pulling the sidewalks up and creating liability to the Town.

The adjustment of a Truck Driver from the budget was a mistake as the position still exists.

The Town Administrator recommends an additional \$25,000 in Street Lighting to make it \$375,000.

There is litigation between the utility company and communities in the state in order to work out the unit cost which has not been settled yet.

They are also examining the possibility of using LED fixtures in the

future.

Litigation has been lowered by \$25,000 as they have recently resolved many issues which will mean less litigation costs. The funding recommended is still conservative.

Several of the Boards and Commissions are not being used and not meeting, but some like the Parks and Recreation Commission and Water Board meet monthly.

The Municipal Court Assistant Judge only gets paid if he has to fill in for the Municipal Court Judge, which has not happened yet.

The Town Grants have been the same for a long time.

They have to be organizations that serve the Town of Lincoln and their letters of request are received every year.

To estimate Health Care, the current roster and working rate are applied

It is currently stable and trending downward and is based on enrollment.

The \$125,000 for Police Department furnishings could not be taken out of restricted funds.

The project is expected to be done by May of 2015 but the Town may need to ensure in the wording of the resolution that the funds are still available if for some reason it goes past June 30th.

When the Town first began earmarking funds for road repairs, all roads were given a general assessment by the Town Engineer and prioritized on a schedule based on need as well as traffic (primary, secondary roads, etc.)

Things like storms that deteriorate conditions may push that schedule back, and the Town also follows along with the utilities so that if there is utility work being done, the Town will do their road work after that work is complete.

There have not been any pothole claims yet on any town roads this year, although the State roads have seen some claims filed.

The Town Administrator believes that \$850,000 is sufficient to get road work that is absolutely necessary done, even if it means moving the schedule or order around.

Snow removal is currently \$44,000 over budget and some of the bills from the last storm have not been processed yet.

In the Police Department Budget, New Recruits are set at Pay Level 3 because a lot of those officers will be entering that step or approaching it, and it will also help offset outfitting them at \$10,000-\$15,000 per officer.

The Town Administrator will provide details to the Budget Board showing the breakdown and overlap within those figures.

There may be overtime associated with training due to travel, etc.

The Budget Board requested and received all Town Fund Balances from the Town Administrator.

The Town Administrator discussed the Chase Farm House project. The idea is to make the house habitable through a Curator Program. It would be open as a museum and the Curator would have to make it available for certain dates, showings, open houses, etc.

The organization Preserve America would tell the Town what needs to be done by them and what needs to be done by the Curator. The Curator could live there while renovations are being done.

The kitchen is outdated and the heating system is not working properly, but other than that the property is not unlivable.

The Curator would pay the costs of utilities, insurance and other expenses and live in the house.

The Curator would also have to adhere to the requirements of the Historical Society, but the property would not need to meet ADA requirements.

The Town would basically just be leasing the property out to the Curator, which would require a minimum liability insurance policy.

It would be a 5-year program which could be reassessed at that point.

The Town Administrator noted that the goal is get the project started and then pass the responsibility of maintenance on to the Curator.

The Finance Director noted that the recommended decrease in State Aid is based on the Governor's budget estimates.

The Motor Vehicle Phaseout figures are also based on state projections.

There has been no confirmation yet on School Bond Housing Aid, so the recommendation is a conservative estimate.

The Town Administrator will be asking that the estimate of Gaming Revenue be reduced by \$200,000 to account for Massachusetts gaming beginning.

State Revaluations Revenues are recommended at \$0 because it is not a full revaluation year.

The recommendation for Insurance Refunds - Rescue Receipts is conservative.

They currently seem to be doing well but the Finance Director isn't recommending an increase because changes in health care coming up could affect receipts.

"Other" Revenues include \$22,000 from the School Department, \$15,000-\$20,000 for the Town to administer the Police Details enterprise fund, fees from the Water Commission because the Town processes water bill payments and also takes care of their accounts payable.

The Town Finance Department bills the Water Department once a year for those services as well as gasoline usage.

Also included is \$100,000 in FEMA funds received, which can be unreliable.

The Lease at Fairlawn has another year on it, which the Town Council will be negotiating.

The Town is in litigation with the RI Builders Association regarding Building Permit Fees, so the recommended budget for those revenues were adjusted down to current levels which is conservative keeping in mind that rates may change due to a settlement related to that.

The Motor Vehicle values are being completed, with only about 200 unvalued cars left which should be done within about a week because they have to be manually researched and entered.

It is believed that they will come in close to the budgeted levy amount.

Tangible Property values have been going down, but the actual numbers on those do not come in until after the budget has already been passed by the Financial Town Meeting.

The Budget Board requested detailed information for all capital projects/resolutions proposed.

The Town Administrator noted that aside from the Police Station Addition, there are no projects large enough that they require that

detail or an architect, but that he will pass along any information that he does have and will answer any specific questions the Budget Board has.

The Police Station Addition bids came in higher than the estimates because of the way it was originally going to be done, but after revisiting the plan and realizing things weren't as simple as expected and wanting to do it the right way, the Town decided not to proceed with the project.

The Town Administrator noted that he does want to and will likely come back to the Budget Board during this budget process in order to propose a study at the High School facility as well in order to begin the early stages with a consultant, a planning committee, etc.

In response to a question from the Budget Board, the Town Administrator noted that currently the Hot Potato School House is deteriorating and is not easily accessible.

It would cost \$25,000 just to structurally rehabilitate it.

The site at Chase Farm where it will be placed has been studied and previously had a building on it.

The Citizens Celebration Committee is donating \$22,000, part of which would square and secure the building and make it movable, and it would then be moved with a foundation and restoration done onsite at the new location.

The lot that it currently sits on has been granted for that purpose, so

the Town may have to put a marker up to say that the site once housed the Hot Potato School House.

It is ½ an acre but oddly shaped.

It's not clear whether the family that granted use to the Town could legally claim it back and make it a buildable lot.

Public Comment

Kristine Donabedian, School Committee Chair, noted that it will be a challenging year coming up and that the contracts are up for negotiation which should be looked at while preserving class sizes and keeping in mind that Charter School Tuitions will be increasing by approximately 40% by 2016.

Adjourn

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Richard Foster, to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 pm.